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ABSTRACT

There is a role, and even a responsibility, for academic libraries in the United States in cooperating with students, scholars, colleagues, institutions, and governments in Third World nations. For example, the international library internship program, in which professional librarians at the middle-management level spend three to six months undertaking a personally tailored program of practical experience, addresses a real need for Malaysian librarians by providing opportunities to work with the latest in library and information technology in a library setting. In particular, Ohio University Library's Southeast Asia Collection not only affords librarians and library science faculty from Southeast Asia an opportunity to work with many of the same materials and languages they will encounter in their home institutions, but also offers valuable assistance in the exploration of the applications of technology to library services. More recently, the establishment of the Malaysian Resource Center within the Southeast Asia Collection recognizes the reality that the Southeast Asian Collection should be a primary source for anyone seeking research materials on Malaysia and represents a long-standing commitment to service beyond the immediate users at Ohio University. The Center will provide Malaysian and American students and faculty across the United States with opportunities for research and exploration. References are cited in four notes. (KM)

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EDUCATING FOR INTERNATIONAL INTERDEPENDENCE:

THE ROLE OF THE ACADEMIC LIBRARY —

OHIO UNIVERSITY AND MALAYSIA

BY

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

We are pleased to address you today both because of the fond memories that we have of visiting Malaysia and working with many fine librarians from Malaysia in regional programs and because of the special relationship which exists between our Library and Malaysia. We do not have to remind many of you that this conference coincides with the inauguration of the Malaysian Resource Center in the Southeast Asia Collection of Ohio University Libraries. We will return to that subject later.

Before beginning our remarks, we should commend the Minister and his predecessors. The academic libraries, library collections, and the librarians of Malaysia set a standard which other nations in the region struggle to approach. This is particularly noteworthy when one recalls that, with one exception, the development of universities in Malaysia, and previously in Malaya, has been accomplished during the past twenty-five years. We trust, that in discussing the role and contributions that the Ohio University Library has made and can make, that we do not convey the idea that academic libraries within Malaysia have done less than an outstanding job, and certainly the strong support of the government and the respective universities over the past quarter century have made this possible.

We do believe that there is a role, and even a responsibility, for academic libraries in the United States in cooperating with students, scholars, colleagues, institutions, and governments

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in Third World nations. In reviewing the possible themes that we would like to discuss today, we have decided to focus on two.[1]

We have chosen these complementary themes because we believe that they are of considerable importance but also because they reflect particular strengths and contributions of Ohio University Library, and thus we are able to discuss practice rather than theory. In brief, the themes are:

1) affording opportunities for continuing education and growth among professional librarians in Malaysia (exemplified in the international internship program pioneered by Ohio University Library and its Southeast Asia Collection in 1979) and

2) the two-fold task of providing appropriate resources for students from abroad in the U.S. and for increasing awareness among Americans of other nations and cultures with which they share the planet (of which the new Malaysian Resource Center marks a new direction).

INTERNATIONAL LIBRARY INTERNSHIPS

We have described our international library internships in some detail elsewhere[2] and today will confine our remarks to a few highlights and a brief consideration of the relevance of this program for today's theme, "Higher Education and Economic Development in Malaysia -- Thinking Ahead," and for libraries in Malaysia, particularly libraries serving institutions of higher education.

In Asia, and in Malaysia in particular, librarianship has generally been recognized as an important professional activity. An active undergraduate library science curriculum is offered at the MARA Institute of Technology. Recognition of the importance of qualified professionals has led to programs to send those who will occupy professional positions in the libraries for schooling in the U.K., U.S., Australia, and elsewhere. The result is a well-trained cadre of librarians.

It is perhaps this success that creates the challenge which we address through the international library internship program. As in other high-technology fields (yes, today librarianship is certainly a high-technology endeavor), change is the one constant with which we live in library and information science. As a result, the professional education which librarians received a decade ago now is dated, and education from earlier, no matter how germane at the time, seems almost quaint. Of course, professional activities help compensate for this -- the Congress of Southeast Asian Librarians (CONSAL), of which we have been fortunate to attend meetings, is a particularly valuable interchange within the region[3] -- and it would be possible to send the librarians back to school.

As neither is completely satisfactory (conferences are too brief for real hands-on experience and schooling is too lengthy, costly, and also lacking in practical experience), the international library internship program addresses a real need in providing opportunities to work with the latest in library and information technology in a library setting. Briefly, professional librarians at the middle-management level spend three to six months undertaking a personally tailored program of practical experience. Usually, interns will divide their time roughly in half between working in their particular areas of responsibility (i.e., cataloging, acquisitions, or reference) and half their time spending brief periods in all of the other library departments. This permits the development of the specific skills and knowledge needed for an individual's immediate responsibilities and also a greater understanding and appreciation of the activities of the other department's in the library and how these mesh to support the library's mission -- providing perspectives which will prepare them for greater management responsibilities in their home institutions.

For librarians and library science faculty from Southeast Asia, our internationally recognized Southeast Asia Collection, headed by Ms. Lian The-Mulliner, affords additional opportunities to work with many of the same materials and languages which they will encounter in their home institutions.

In addition to our outstanding Southeast Asia Collection, Ohio University Library can offer ample opportunity to become familiar with the latest in library and information technology, to investigate how such technology impacts on library organization and management, and to discuss with librarians familiar with the region how such technology might fit into the Southeast Asian context. Of course, it is up to each intern to draw on her or his own special knowledge of the context in which s/he works to interpret the information given. The goal is not to provide pat answers and uncritical adoption of Western answers to an Asian environment but rather to provide stimulating experiences and professional guidance to assist the interns in determining such answers for themselves.

Beyond our valuable staff who bring human qualities as well as an awareness of Asia and Southeast Asia, Ohio University Library has other advantages which make it an ideal site for such a program. We would be remiss if we did not mention the support and assistance which the Library receives from our University President, our Provost and other senior administrators, our outstanding Center for International Studies under Dr. Felix Gagliano and the International Student and Faculty Services Office as well as the faculty, staff and students of the University in general.

In assisting the interns to explore the applications of

technology to library services, we have a relatively long history in such applications. In the 1960s, we were a founding member of OCLC (now the Online Computer Library Center but then the Ohio College Library Center), a national and international library network with 6,000 member libraries and which, within its database, contains almost 12 million library records and is adding over 1 million more each year. In 1971, Ohio University Library was the first member institution to input a record online into that system. Today, with OCLC, we are able to share the demanding tasks of cataloging with all other member institutions, to identify which other member institutions may have a copy of a book or article which our library users may need, and online to ask that, or several, institutions to lend it to us. Conversely, all of the other member institutions are able to identify the materials which we have and to request to borrow them from us -- a valuable plus for the Malaysian Resource Center and one of which I hope all of the Malaysian and American visitors from other institutions in this country are aware. The networking through OCLC is a striking example of cooperation to share scarce resources and to maximize the effectiveness of skilled personnel.

In serving our local users, we have an automated library system based on the Virginia Tech Library System (VTLS), known locally as ALICE, which provides an automated circulation system, an online public access catalog for users, and all of this is based on our computerized cataloging through OCLC. Other enhancements to automate serials control and acquisitions are expected in the next year.[4] This system also permits users of terminals from anywhere on campus or microcomputers in their homes to access the public catalog to identify materials. As this is not a library meeting, we will not amplify on our pride and joy with the system.

Augmenting the system to identify the latest information available, we offer computerized searching of most indexes using microcomputers to download the information identified. Beyond these, microcomputers are used for a large and growing number of administrative and routine tasks. The import, for the intern, is that there is ample opportunity to encounter and work with virtually the gamut of computer applications to library service.

We will mention only one additional strength of the internship program, that of location. The Columbus, Ohio, area is a major center of information technology today. OCLC is headquartered just outside in Dublin, Ohio, and Chemical Abstracts, which is in the forefront in providing online information services, is in Columbus as are Battelle and a range other information services and companies. Major library and information science academic programs are available at Indiana University, Kent State University, the University of Kentucky and the University of Pittsburgh. In describing the information-rich environs, we cannot neglect Athens and the Ohio University campus. Here the intern encounters

a cosmopolitan university with a large international student enrollment and a university and community committed to international understanding, all of this in a beautiful and relatively safe environment, some distance from the distractions of urban centers.

Lest we wax poetic, let us conclude the discussion of the international internship program with some realities. In the past six years, internship training has been provided to more than 20 professional librarians from all of the ASEAN countries (except Brunei and Singapore), from the Republic of China on Taiwan, the People's Republic of China, Papua New Guinea, and Saudi Arabia. Support for the program has been provided by UNESCO, the Asia Foundation, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the U.S. Department of Education, and from the interns' home governments and institutions. We would add that while we have direct costs which must be met, the costs are only a fraction of what it would cost for a formal educational program abroad and the results, based on the evaluations which we have received from the interns and their home institutions, have been impressive. To date, we have only had one participant from Malaysia, but we would hope that such an opportunity might be extended to others in the future.

MALAYSIAN RESOURCE CENTER

Earlier this morning, we had the pleasure of attending, with our distinguished guests from Malaysia, the opening of the Malaysian Resource Center within the Library's Southeast Asia Collection. All of you have received a brochure describing the Center and its projected activities. Without repeating that information, we will make two points.

The first is that today's ceremony was an impressive step, but only one of many which have gone before and many that will follow. Since its creation in 1967, the Southeast Asia Collection has, in less than two decades, grown into a major national and international resource for research on Southeast Asia (in this, it is not unlike the nation of Malaysia which traces its prominence to Merdeka [independance] only a decade earlier than the Collection). Some years ago, the Southeast Asia Collection undertook a serious assessment of its national and international role. It was recognized that publications from and about Southeast Asia were ballooning to an extent that no academic library in the U.S. could hope or afford to collect everything from and about every country in region. The wisdom of this analysis was attested to at a meeting this past March in conjunction with the national Association for Asian Studies Annual Conference in Philadelphia, in which representatives from the eight academic research libraries with Southeast Asian Collections and the Library of Congress discussed ways in which responsibilities might be shared.

In its decision to concentrate its collection development efforts, the Southeast Asia Collection considered its historical, local, and national roles. Historically, when the Collection was created concurrently with the Southeast Asia Studies Program (under the direction of Professors Norman Parmer and Paul van der Veur), the Program and the Collection focused on Malaysia and Indonesia. Locally, the University has developed significant ties with Malaysia (personified today in holder of the Tun Abdul Razak Chair in Southeast Asian Studies, Datin Professor Fatimah Hamid Don) while the Southeast Asia Studies Program (now Center) has built on those beginnings to also develop strengths on the Philippines. Nationally, the Collection observed that, while Cornell had unapproachable strengths for Indonesia and most other countries in the region were receiving major attention from one or more of the other collection, no Collection had identified Malaysia and its neighboring states of Brunei and Singapore as foci. As a result, in the past decade, the Southeast Asia Collection has concentrated on these nations with secondary emphasis on the Association for Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and its other member nations.

For Malaysia, as the occasion of our discussion, this means that Ohio University receives as much and usually more materials from Malaysia than any other academic institution in the U.S. We believe that it is safe to say, despite the outstanding growth and development of libraries in Malaysia, only the National Library and libraries serving some of the major universities in Malaysia, have larger collections on Malaysia than Ohio University.

With this background and with Ohio University Library's commitment to resource sharing, the Malaysian Resource Center is a logical step. In part it recognizes the reality that the Southeast Asian Collection should be a primary source for anyone seeking research materials on Malaysia. It also represents a long standing commitment to service beyond the immediate users at Ohio University. Companies and U.S. government officials are increasingly aware that we may be the only institution with particular Malaysian materials. We would add that the service which they receive is also an important attraction.

Beyond those who need materials for research, academic, policy, or financial interests, there are millions of Americans who know little about Malaysia and whose lives are the poorer for that ignorance. Within the Center for International Studies, there have been, and continue to be, active programs to increase international awareness in the schools of Southeastern Ohio and to engage in citizenship awareness to make the wider population more cognizant of the cultural richness of the world. While the Malaysian Resource Center will not, with the simple cutting of a ribbon, banish the ignorance in this country of Malaysia and things Malaysian, it is a further step on the road. It will support the outreach program of the Center for International Studies and

similar programs elsewhere in the U.S. It is lighting a candle rather than cursing the darkness.

We are particularly pleased that the Malaysian Resource Center will offer films, tapes, and other materials beyond those usually thought of as information. It is consonant with the role of the library as a repository of the human record, not just the written record. Such materials offer the opportunity of reaching citizenry with a wide range of interests, who may be little interested in a scholarly tome but will find relaxation and common threads of human experience in a Noblat record or a Shahnon Ahmad novel. We are sure that scholars, with the increasing attention given to popular history, will also find a rich repository in the future.

The second quality of the Malaysian Resource Center directly addresses the theme of this gathering. The more than 15,000 Malaysians studying in institutions of higher education in North America represent a serious challenge and responsibility for the academic community. Some of us who are older may recall schooling during a colonial era. The curriculum frequently focused on the colonial center with more information provided about the towns and provinces in the West than about neighboring kampongs and states. Not that such learning is necessarily bad, only that when it displaces students' awareness of their home history, heritage, and neighbors, something has been lost. This is not unlike what Malaysian students encounter when enrolled in academic institutions in North America. Few will find many courses on Asia, not to mention Southeast Asia. We are more fortunate at Ohio University, with its strong Southeast Asia Studies Center and numerous faculty who have taught and done research in Malaysia, but students should not expect that all of their American teachers will be familiar with the Malaysian and Southeast Asian situations.

If this is the case in general, it is much more true for students enrolled at other North American universities in specialized fields of knowledge such as science, engineering, education, and business, as so many Malaysians do--recognizing the economic development needs of Malaysia. Even if few Malaysian courses are offered, there is an alternative. As a student climbs the educational ladder, there are increasing opportunities for individual research and exploration, for testing the theories and lessons presented in class in contexts of the student's choosing.

The Malaysian Resource Center and the strength of the Southeast Asia Collection provide the substance for such testing, using Malaysian data and contexts. It is important to recognize that the mission of the Malaysian Resource Center is national. It serves not only the students and faculty at Ohio University or the citizenry of Southeastern Ohio. It is available to students and faculty across North America (the OCLC systems helps make this

possible) attending or affiliated with American institutions. As an anonymous example, there is a Malaysian studying taxation at a major institution in a neighboring state. The student contacted our Collection to ask about property taxes in Malaysia, based on what the student is learning in courses in that institution. Based on the subsequent materials borrowed, it is evident that the student has discovered that Malaysia has a very different approach than that in the U.S. Multiply this example by hundreds and thousands and the potential value of the Malaysian Resource Center for Malaysia becomes clearer.

Certainly, not every student from Malaysia will want or need to use Malaysian materials. But it is important for the student, and for Malaysia in the longer run, that such materials be available and that Malaysian students be encouraged to take advantage of them. We would only add that we are already very pleased to help make our resources available to numerous Malaysians from other institutions who come here to do research during academic vacations. We would welcome more.

We are very pleased with the support and the materials of the Malaysian Embassy. We look forward to a continuing mutually beneficial association. We hope that the Minister and other government officials in Malaysia can help to identify Ohio University as a repository, if not a depository, for Malaysian materials. We also encourage the Embassy and the Malaysian Students Department to assist us in making Malaysian students in the U.S. more aware of the Malaysian Resource Center, of the materials in our Southeast Asia Collection, of our willingness to help and to share these materials, and of the advantages to the students and to Malaysia resulting from this effort.

As we closed the initial section with a discussion of realities, perhaps that is a fitting theme for the conclusion of the paper as well. While we have dealt at length on the strengths of the Malaysian Resource Center (current and potential) and of the Ohio University Library's Southeast Asia Collection, we hardly need remind everyone that such strengths do not come cheap. In the past two decades, the Collection has achieved its present stature as a result of substantial support from Ohio University, from the Library, and from the U.S. Government. Since the establishment of the Tun Razak Chair, some funding is also provided to assist us in strengthening our holdings of Malaysian materials and to address the research needs of the Tun Razak Professor. At the same time, publishing costs and the quantities of materials available in Malaysia and from other countries on Malaysia are rising.

We have emphasized the positive points in the growth of the Southeast Asia Collection. There have been other times, in the mid-1970s, when Ohio University faced severe financial crises. Those are painful to remember and, we hope, behind us. Still, it was instructive. As a result of that experience, we are aware

that public budgets are subject to many factors. To prevent such pain in the future, the Library is pleased to announce that, with the support of the President and the University administration and the Development Office, we have launched a campaign to provide an endowment for the Southeast Asia Collection of $1 million. We have already received initial gifts of more than $100,000 toward that goal. We believe that, with this endowment, we can assure that the next two decades of the Southeast Asia Collection and of the Malaysian Resource Center will be as fruitful as the past.

NOTES

1. A wider range of activities was described in K. Mulliner, Hwa-Wei Lee, and Lian The-Mulliner, "International Information Exchange and Southeast Asia Collections -- A View from the U.S.," Journal of Educational Media Science, Vol. 18, No. 2 (Winter 1980), pp. 3-18.

2. Hwa-Wei Lee, "International Library Internships: An Effective Approach to Co-operation," International Library Review, Vol. 17 (1985), pp. 17-25. Also, K. Mulliner and Hwa-Wei Lee, "International Exchange of Librarians and the Ohio University Internship Program," College & Research Libraries News, Vol 43, No. 10 (November 1982), pp. 345-348.

3. The published proceedings of the recent meetings are informative. D. E. K. Wijasuriya, Yip Seong Chun, and Syed Salim Agha (eds.), Access to Information: Proceedings of the Fifth Congress of Southeast Asian Librarians, Kuala Lumpur, 25-29 May 1981 (Kuala Lumpur: CONSAL V, 1982), and The Library in the Information Revolution: Proceedings of the Sixth Congress of Southeast Asian Librarians, Singapore, 30 May-3 June 1983 (Singapore: CONSAL VI, 1983).

4. The system and our experiences are described in Hwa-Wei Lee, K. Mulliner, E. Hoffmann-Pinther, and Hannah McCauley, "Alice at One: Candid Reflections on the Adoption, Installation, and Use of the Virginia Tech Library System (VTLS) at Ohio University," paper presented at the Integrated Online Library Systems Second National Conference, September 13-14, 1984, Atlanta, Georgia. Published in the Proceedings (Canfield, Ohio: Genaway and Associates, 1984), pp. 228-242.